Mrs. Ward's Best Story. Mrs. Humphry Ward has for the hero of her new story, "The Marriage of William Ashe" (Harper & Bros.), a young statesman who comes in time to be Prime Minister. There was an eminent political character-our memory is that he also was a Prime Minister-in her last previous Readers will recall how that distinguished man was holding forth in a sonorous and somewhat too loud voice at a surreptitious party given by Lady Rose's daughter, when the lady who employed Lady Rose's daughter as a secretary, and who was mistress of the house, came down stairs from a sick chamber and with considerable acerbity and exhibition of a sense of personal injury dismissed the company. That earlier Prime Minister impressed us by the ease and nonchalance with which he bore himself on social occasions-even very trying social occasions, occasions surcharged with a tremulous and disturbing quality. We thought as we read at that

time that a Prime Minister would have

more chance of displaying an engaging placidity of demeanor in awkward social

moments than another would who might not have any very exalted place in the

world. Assurance attends naturally upon

a sense of power.

For a moment we were afraid of Ashe the coming Prime Minister in the new story. To the lady who was to be his mother-in-law he said, concerning what ceremony may have attended the seating of him in Parliament, that "it fell jolly flat.". We prayed that our impending Prime Minister might not be too tripping in his conversational style. The reading of much current English fiction has made us willing to encounter the word "jolly" only rarely. We found as we went on that Ashe was to delight us and not to disturb us. We were not long in coming to the opinion that this is the best of Mrs. Ward's stories—best in the respect that it is the most persistently and pervasively interesting, and that it is the one with the least of obvious and labored preachments, descriptions and metaphysics. We remember the night landscapes and the theological essays written by night in other stories by Mrs. Ward-remember them as entire and grisly visions, but remember no edifying and compensating part of them-and are glad that this story flows more easily and un-

Especially and enthusiastically grateful are we for Lady Kitty. She, like Ashe, the hero, communicated to us certain tremors at first. She broke out at Ashe. She pleaded with him not to ask her if she liked balls. She preferred to converse of the incidents of French hunting. The dogs of France! The dogs of St. Hubert. We shivered a little. We were willing to retire from the din of the St. Hubert bowwow. But Lady Kitty speedily forgot the dogs and, so far as we have discovered, was never at the trouble to remember them again. She developed into a most unreasonable and engaging personality.

accountingly on its possibly reprehensible

We see Lady Kitty in an attractive Cambridgeshire interior. We have a fine library and a surrounding of books belonging to a level headed lord who never read them. The quiet, respectable graces of a most estimable household are set forth. Think of a library "with giallo antico columns and Adam decorations." Lady Grosville, presiding female of the place, is described as looking like the reformer Savonarola and like a horse. In the illustration, by Mr. Sterner, she looks like Benjamin Disraeli, who may have looked like both of the others. Into this noble library, among a conventional, hungry and waiting company, fifteen minutes after the hour for dinner, comes our heroine, the Lady Kitty, with a recalcitrant dog. She explains the dog while the unaccustomed and unsympathetic company aches for soup. For reasons obvious to us we forbear from quotation. The reader must forgive us, even while he wishes that we would quote the whole book.

We have heard it said that Mrs. Ward is without humor. If we ever hear it said | a kind of moral death? again we shall not believe it. If Kitty with the dog does not provide a humorous situation we have never known one. If there is no humor of an ironical cast where the Grosville girls undertake to alleviate Kitty's headache (at page 435 in our fugitive copy), we have no understanding of humor. To be sure, this quality is not persistent-nor need it be. And yet we doubt whether we may not find it always subtly employed.

We should like to dwell upon this story; but that, perhaps fortunately, we cannot do. It will surely be enough to say that in recent fiction we have found nothing by which we have been more impressed and entertained. Mrs. Ward has her limitations, and her abilities also. We are no friend of paradoxies, but it will not surprise us after reading this story if she transcends her limitations and gives us something that we shall particularly like to assail and find altogether impregnable.

The Dreadful German Army Again.

Lieut. Bilse continues to draw sad and dreadful pictures of the German Army. His new book, "Dear Fatherland" (John Lane), is as shocking and depressing as his other one-the famous story of life in a small garrison town, which disturbed the German authorities and caused the Lieutenant to be put into prison.

Early in this tale we find a sentiment that may well prepare us for the melancholy history that is to follow. Says the Lieutenant at page 17: "To hear evil spoken of another is a satisfaction to all who know too well how little good others can possibly say of us."

An opinion of this sort has an immediate and powerful effect on the spirits. They sink at once. The reader will hardly find them rising again in the course of the Lieutenant's story. We dare say that this is no great matter. High spirits do not necessarily imply, involve and constitute the truth. Let us glance for a moment at Major Koehler (retired), head of the unhappy Koehler family, as he appears in an early extremity at page 2. We read:

To-day Major Koehler was striding restlessly up and down the three rooms, which opened out of one another in his humble abode, with a most alarming expression on his face, rapping out the same oath every time he passed through the doors, and the ends of his still military mustache came in contact with the curtain tassels; then he would turn halfangrily, half pityingly, to his wife, who was sitting, with her hands in her lap and her eyes full of tears, silently staring out of the window form of government for all mankind. at the rain: or he would throw an anxious glance in the direction of his two daughters, huddled up in the corner of the room like two whipped pupples. gazing at each other with nervous and helpless

the girls, a Lieutenant in the German army, Ridder handling the German vote. He was in debt. The Major swore because would have been particularly instructed of the indebtedness of his son and because and entertained if he could have seen them his own formidable mustache knocked against the tassels of the curtains. His wife wept because of the undischarged obligations of Benno. The girls were is one of the typical victims of the tale. huddled up like whipped pupples because | Sergt. Vogt, one of the most offensive of their brother was unable to pay what he the numerous tyrants of the barracks,

cruit about to go for a dragoon, saw his all up. His eye detected a little pile of sister kissing a young man behind a tree. litter that had been allowed to remain

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Grube was always disposed for trouble.

"What business have you with my sister?"

He "strode across the room," and grasping he inquired. The story says that he shook Grube by the feet, "pulled him out of bed, irritation set up in his nerves by his troubles. with rage and agitation. The young man who was kissing his sister had spirit. He | the floor. replied in a tone and with gestures of deflance, whereupon Grube knocked him down with a stick. After that Grube went to see his own girl, and boxed her ears because he found her flirting. He was a man of violence. A soldier should be that on occasion, but a soldier must have discretion. Grube got himself into plenty of

There can be no doubt that Lieut. Koehler was persecuted. After his debts had been discharged, he easily incurred martyrdom for other reasons. The German army, like other aggregations of society, knows ways of making it unpleasant for those of whom it disapproves. "When Koehler, accom-panied by Schill, met some of his brother officers, whilst exercising his charger, they bowed to him as though he were a complete stranger, and seemed highly astonished that such a criminal should carry his tarnished honor in broad daylight among his fellow men." A court-martial caused him to be confined to his room for eight days. What was the consequence? Was he visited with chastened and repentant feelings? We read: "In these weary hours of loneliness couraged him in his professional career; one's self, for mere life's sake, was, after all,

The Lieutenant's sister Lilly was engaged to be married to an officer named Weiss. Weiss was well nigh unspeakable, and we hate to speak of him. In order to obtain money he made love to Lilly's aunt, a maiden lady, 62 years old. Lilly and her Aunt Stänzchen are rivals in this unusual and explicit story. We turn from Aunt Stänzchen to certain opinions expressed by Lieut. Koehler's friend, Schill, who coursgeously resigned from the army after bearing with gross injustice for a long time. Lieut. Schill was of the opinion that Germany was not likely to go to war. What he said should interest the English and the French. Said Lieut. Schill:

With what nation should we want to go to war? At the most we should sometimes like to show our teeth to our English cousins when we see how they trade on the good nature and enforced reserve of their German neighbors. But to go to war with them, by God, no! A war on land with England would be highly unchivalrous on our part, for they could not raise a worthy opponent for a single German army corps out of the ruins of their army. The possibility of a naval encounter does not enter seriously into the question, for such an event would seriously into the question, for such an extended on not engage the entire sympathies of the nation in the same way as a war on land. Interest in the navy, in spite of all the plans for the fleet and naval manguvers, does not enter into the German nature. He is a soldier par excellence, not a sea dog, simply because the geographical conditions of his country are such that he has practically nothing to do with the sea. Should the question of a naval war ever the sea. Should the question of a naval war ever seriously arise, the chances would be the same for each side, despite Albion's bragging about

The English Navy will take notice that Lieut. Schill'is not much afraid of it. Bismarck's respect for England was greater than the Lieutenant's. But France has no occasion to laugh. Lieut. Schill says of

No reasonable person believes any longer in the fable of the hereditary German enemy. At any rate, it would be a strong proof of our want of national pride and lack of faith in ourselves if we were to be afraid of being blown up by a bomb thrown by the decadent Third Republic. France has become to-day a harmiess neighbor, whose has become to day and whom we have to thank for the latest ladies' fashions. The only thing we resent about her is that she overwhelms us with the degenerate productions of her play manufactured. factories.

Not flattering to France, but we suppose that that considerable people will survive. It has certainly done well in the devil wagon industry. Though Lieut. Schill objected to the German Army, he approved form of government for all mankind, especially for Germans, who have never known any other." He should come over here and take notice that the Germans do very well with the democratic form. Benno, the Major's boy, the brother of He should see Carl Schurz and Mr.

last November. We have spoken of Grube, the dragoon who boxed his sweetheart's ears. Grube came home drunk one night at a late hour. We must go according to our marks on the margin of the book. Grube, the re-guards, snoring already!" This woke them

so that his body fell with a dull thud to

"Grube obeyed, fearing the worst from Vogt's drunkenness if he did not at once comply. He brushed up the heap of dirt. Vogt meanwhile standing over him with the candle; but on his preparing to get up from the floor Vogt shouted:

" 'Carry it all away in your snout!' "Grube made another effort to rise. 'Do you hear me, you beast of the dung

heap?' howled Vogt furiously, and seizing Grube by the scruff of the neck he pressed his face down into the heap of dirt."

to say that several of the dragoons set upon Vogt at this and threw him down. The rage of Grube was naturally great, and it need not surprise us that, as the sergeant fell, this persecuted soldier should have rushed up, with the sheath of a sword in his hand, and struck him a blow on the head which rendered him unconscious."

Aunt Stänzchen died when Lilly, who had duly married Lieut. Weiss, was a little unduly about to become a mother. Aunt Stänzchen was revengeful at the last. She | we find the hounded Grube shooting his sent as "a last greeting" to Lilly "twenty- Colonel. His Colonel happened to be a and bitter disenchantment, Koehler buried four closely written sheets, revealing her good man, but Grube had been driven to the remains of those ideals which had en- relations with Weiss and all his baseness." lengths where he was unable to discrimi-Her will, which left all her fortune to the nate. The Colonel's name was Preusse. for was it not evident that to live untrue to | poor, contained an envenomed clause which | "A flash of fire struck Preusse in the face said: "First Lieut. Weiss receives the sum as Grube shot him. "and he sank backward of £1,000, which has already been paid him." to the earth." Grube was sentenced to This evil man, when he heard about Aunt Stänzchen's will, shuffled off the last restraint which policy had imposed upon him.

During a violent quarrel with his wife, in which his pent up rage overstepped all bounds, Welss struck her violently, after having dragged her, screaming for help, into his room, and on her falling

senseless to the floor he kicked her in his blind This is the most complete device ever invented for fill it was not until his rage had exhausted itself ing and classifying clippings, illustrations, manu and he was able to take a calm view of the situa-

tion that his inhuman conduct dawned slowly upon First Lieut. Weiss left the town by the night express to escape his creditors, the results of his doubtful money transactions, and the inevitable summons to appear before the court of honor. That same night his wife brought a stillborn

son into the world. It is perhaps unnecessary to go in detail further into the tragedies and sorrows of the story. We shall venture to skira merely. At page 188 it says: "The unapproachable daughters of the townspeople saw a seducer in every Lieutenant, and even the salute of an officer was sufficient to compromise a girl in the eyes of her fellow citizens." At page 200 Lieut. Koehler permits himself to fall victim to the charms of Capt. Vogel's notorious housekeeper, the mature and calculating Hanna. At

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3

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with Hanna, he strikes a recalcitrant corhe floor.

"'Sweep that up, you pig!' roared Vogt. poral in the face with his sword, so that the corporal falls to the ground, covered with blood. At the foot of the same page our unhappy Lieutenant puts an end to stroke during the night put a termination to his life." The funeral of the two took place on a melancholy April day. "Icy showers mixed with sleet drove in sheets through the roads and streets, heavy, gray black, lowering clouds swept over the sky and the sun, sad as a weeping eye, broke We respect discipline, but we are glad at rare intervals through a milky white veil of mist and shone upon the numerous

At page 240 we find Weiss, turned professional gambler, nabbed by the police. He had posed as a Count of the Austrian "The Public Presecutor was as Empire. happy as a king at having caught in the person of the Hungarian Count not only a card sharper but also the long wanted First Lieutenant of dragoons. This was the close of Weiss's career." At page 254

Continued on Eighth Page.

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